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AUTHOR Andero, Abraham
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ABSTRACT

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of community college transfer programs in Mississippi a study was performed of the state's community/junior college students who transferred to the University of Southern Mississippi and earned a bachelor's degree between 1984 and 1987. Graduates' academic transcripts were reviewed to gather data on sex, associate degree college, baccalaureate program major, degree completion time, ages at entry and graduation, associate and baccalaureate grade point averages, and credit hours earned. In addition, a four-page questionnaire was administered to graduates, requesting information on their baccalaureate program, further education, first job after employment, and general information. Results from both method include the following: (1) more than one half of the students across all degree programs indicated participation in educational programs; (2) the impact which the baccalaureate degree had on respondents earning potential varied for degree programs from a 63.49% increase for education/psychology to a 40.28% for business; (3) it appeared that many graduates were satisfied with their positions, with 90.14% of business and 67% of educational/ psychology graduates indicating that they had earned no further academic degrees; (4) the majority of students completed their baccalaureate degree between 1 to 3 years after their transfer; and (5) graduates who most recently completed their baccalaureate degrees and had a strong relationship between employment and their degrees were the most likely to enroll in further education. Appendixes featuring extensive tabled data and a list of references are included. (MAB)

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# The Academic Performance of Mississippi Community/Junior College Transfer Students at the University of Southern Mississippi

Abraham Andero
Jackson State University

Presented at the Annual Meeting of the
Mid-South Educational Research Association
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# The Academic Performance of Mississippi Community/Junior College Transfer Students at the University of Southern Mississippi

Colleges and universities accommodate transfer students from two-year colleges in several different ways. Hohenstein (1980) identified five basic models of transfer programs: the parallel program, the upside-down degree, the fixed number of elective credits, the complementary major, and the fully-articulated major. Parallel programs are the most common. In this configuration, the courses taken at the two-year college parallel course requirements of the first two years of the baccalaureate degree. The upside-down degree pattern accepts the career courses taken at the two-year college as the student's baccalaureate major. Students in these programs complete their general education component at the four-year institution. The most restrictive transfer program is the fixed number of elective credits. Only a selected number of technical courses in the two-year program are accepted as electives to support but not replace the student's major at the baccalaureate level. The complementary major accepts all technical courses in the two-year program major but requires the student to develop another major in a related area. The fully articulated major also accepts

the two-year college major but builds upon the major to provide the student with depth and breadth in the degree. The specific transfer program configuration at any institution is the result of interaction between the three main constituent groups: the students who are concerned with credits and degree completion time, the institution which is protective of the quality of the degree, and the public which stresses efficient use of resources and desires to limit unnecessary student hardships (Minnesota Higher Education Coordinating Board, 1979).

Transfer programs are often viewed as nontraditional programs on the campuses of four-year colleges and universities. The specific definition of a nontraditional program is unique to each institution, but generally includes those programs which "do not enroll students in the institution's historical mode" (Watkins, 1981, p. 373). Faculty view these programs to be "subtly out of step" with the rest of the institution (Moretz, 1985, p. 113). The transfer student is perceived as the "in-between student," an individual not equal in ability and academic achievements when compared to the native student of a four-year college, but slightly better than the two-year college student in an occupational program (Moore, 1981, p. 25). A dichotomy exists on

most campuses in which programs and students are classified as either traditional or nontraditional, with nontraditional inferring "less than." This approach to classifying programs is misleading, especially since there is no standardized or commonly accepted definition of what is traditional or nontraditional. "Nontraditional is essentially a political term describing the degree of departure from a personal ideal of what is traditional" (Thrash, 1978, p. 463). A more accurate method of classification is to view all programs as representing a position on a continuum with traditional and nontraditional at opposite ends. The quality and value of those programs on the nontraditional side of the continuum should be determined through an effective assessment using evaluation procedures which can be applied to all programs (Thrash, 1978, p. 455). The evaluation process should concentrate on outputs rather than inputs. The evaluation design should be value-added, extending beyond the confines of the campus to assess the overall effect of the program upon student lives. A student follow-up survey is an appropriate method for implementing this type of evaluation.

## Methodology

### Subjects

The subjects were Mississippi community/junior college transfer students to the University of Southern

Mississippi earning a bachelor's degree between 1984 and 1987.

Quantitative data for this study were collected from two sources:

1. Review of the graduates' academic transcripts to obtain data on: sex, associate degree college, baccalaureate program major, degree completion time, age at entry, age at graduation, associate degree grade point average, baccalaureate degree grade point average and credit hours earned.

2. Quantitative data were collected by survey questionnaire from the associate degree transfer students to the University of Southern Mississippi earning a bachelor's degree between 1984 and 1987 concerning their perceptions of their baccalaureate programs. Each questionnaire was coded to prevent duplicate mailings.

Instrument

A four-page questionnaire was used to collect data from the sampled graduates. The instrument used to collect the data was developed specifically for this study using a closed-ended format which provided a standard frame of reference for participant responses. The questions were put in a contextual framework to facilitate accurate recall. Each question in the instrument was analyzed in terms of its association with a specific hypothesis.

Questions on similar topics were grouped together and preceded by a transition paragraph to create a logical flow throughout the questionnaire. The Likert method and rating scales were used to measure attitudes. The Likert attitude scaling technique forced respondents to express a degree of favorableness or unfavorableness to value statements. A scale value was assigned to each response. Together the scores of all related questions measured the respondent's attitude towards a given point of view. The rating scale approach allowed for the measurement of the respondent's position on an attitude continuum. These two techniques allowed for the collection of data with minimal effort on the part of the respondent and were easily scored.

The instrument was constructed with four major sections: the baccalaureate program, further education, first job after graduation and current job employment information, and general information. The instrument consisted of a total of 13 questions. The questionnaire was pretested on previous follow-up studies of two-year and four-year graduates. The pretest procedure included personal interviews with the participants. The instrument was analyzed for clarity, the flow and sequence of questions, ambiguous terminology, biased questions and unreliable answers, and any other possible defects in the design.

## Analysis

The data from the review of the graduates' academic transcripts and the data from the graduates' responses to the survey questionnaire were primarily descriptive.

Frequency distributions and percentage comparisons were the primary methods of analysis. Cross tabulations and chi-square tests were also used to test the hypotheses.

## Results

Some significant differences were found relative to whether or not there have been educational programs other than employer training with respect to the type of degree completed. The level of participation varied by degree programs with education and psychology majors recording the highest rates of participation in further education activities. More than half of the majors across all degree programs indicated participation in educational programs while less than half of the majors indicated no participation in educational programs.

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Insert Table 1 about here

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Results indicated that there was a significant difference in the relationship of graduates' perceptions of impact of the baccalaureate degree on their increased opportunities for continued growth in earning potential.

Findings seemed to suggest that the amount of impact of the baccalaureate degree on their increased opportunities for continued growth in earning potential varied across all degree programs. Education/Psychology had 63.49% of the respondents selecting very much, while Business had 40.28% respondents selecting very much.

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Insert Table 2 about here

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It was found that a significant difference existed among the types of degree programs completed with respect to whether there have been any other licenses, degrees, certificates or additional training/educational experiences since graduation. It appeared that many graduates were satisfied with their positions. There were 90.14% of the Business graduates who indicated they had not earned other academic degrees, certificates, or licenses, followed by 67.19% of Education/Psychology responses.

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Insert Table 3 about here

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Results indicated that there was a significant difference among the types of degree programs with respect to the length of time required to complete the degree across all degree programs. Results seemed to indicate

that the majority of the students completed their baccalaureate degree programs between one to three years after transferring from a community/junior college to the University of Southern Mississippi. It appeared that those who changed majors, as well as undecided majors, had spent longer periods of time than others. For example, 23% of those completing in one year were Education/Psychology majors while only 13.7% of those completing in two years were Education/Psychology majors. On the other hand, in Liberal Arts the percentage of those completing in one, two, three, four or five years was similar.

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Insert Table 4 about here

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Findings seemed to suggest that the total credit hours required to complete the baccalaureate degree varied across all degree programs. Results indicated that more than half of degree programs completed their baccalaureate degree programs by earning between 101-150 total credit hours. It appeared that those who had lost many of the transferred credit hours from community/junior college, as well as changing majors after being admitted into the degree program at the University of Southern Mississippi, had earned more

total credit hours than others. For example, 81%, 73% and 64.3% of those earning between 101-150 total credit hours were Business, Liberal Arts and Education/Psychology respectively.

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Insert Table 5 about here

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## Discussion

The baccalaureate degree is an intermediate educational goal for many graduates. Many of the respondents having associate degrees decided to continue their education beyond that degree because of the following three reasons: desire to obtain a baccalaureate degree; to improve long-term career plans; and to obtain a job.

Many of the graduates from the University of Southern Mississippi appeared to have continued their education for advanced degrees in occupationally-related training. The level of participation varied by degree program with Liberal Arts and Art majors recording the highest rates of participation in post-baccalaureate educational programs followed by Health/Human Services and Education/Psychology. Graduates who most recently completed their baccalaureate degrees and had a strong relationship between employment and their degrees were the most likely to enroll in further education.

The results seemed to indicate that the length of time and the total credit hours required to complete the baccalaureate degree from the time of enrollment in upper division course work varied among degree programs. According to the data, the majority of the respondents indicated having completed their baccalaureate degree programs between one to three yeas after transferring from a community/junior college to the University of Southern Mississippi. This seemed to indicate that associate degree transfer students to a four-year institution usually do extend the period of time needed to complete their baccalaureate degree.

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TABLE 1

Survey Respondents' Participation in Education Programs
(Questionnaire Item #4)

| Participation | Liberal Arts and Arts | Business | Education and Psychology | Science and Technology | Health and Human Services | Row Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | 39<br>25.00*<br>79.59**<br>15.30*** | 37<br>23.72<br>52.86<br>14.51 | 41<br>26.28<br>63.08<br>16.08 | 16<br>10.26<br>42.11<br>6.27 | 23<br>14.74<br>69.70<br>9.02 | 156<br>61.18 |
| No | 10<br>10.10<br>20.41<br>3.92 | 33<br>33.33<br>47.14<br>12.94 | 24<br>24.24<br>36.92<br>9.41 | 22<br>22.22<br>57.89<br>8.63 | 10<br>10.10<br>30.30<br>3.92 | 99<br>38.82 |
| Column Total | 49<br>19.22 | 70<br>27.45 | 65<br>25.49 | 38<br>14.90 | 33<br>12.94 | 255<br>100.00 |

Chi-square = 15.9 , df = 4, p < .05
*Row Percent
**Column Percent
***Overall Percent

TABLE 2

Survey Respondents' Perceptions of the Baccalaureate Degree
Providing Increased Opportunities for Growth in Earning Potential
(Questionnaire Item #3)

| Growth for Earning Potential | Liberal Arts and Arts | Business | Education and Psychology | Science and Technology | Health and Human Services | Row Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Very Much | 17<br>13.60*<br>34.69**<br>6.67*** | 29<br>23.20<br>40.28<br>11.37 | 40<br>32.00<br>63.49<br>15.69 | 21<br>16.80<br>55.26<br>8.24 | 18<br>14.40<br>54.55<br>7.06 | 125<br>49.03 |
| Some | 21<br>22.58<br>42.86<br>8.24 | 36<br>38.71<br>50.00<br>14.12 | 12<br>12.90<br>19.05<br>4.71 | 14<br>15.05<br>36.84<br>5.49 | 10<br>10.75<br>30.30<br>3.92 | 93<br>36.48 |
| Little | 11<br>29.73<br>22.45<br>4.31 | 7<br>18.92<br>9.72<br>2.74 | 11<br>29.73<br>17.46<br>4.31 | 3<br>8.11<br>7.89<br>1.18 | 5<br>13.51<br>15.15<br>1.96 | 37<br>14.50 |

Continued

TABLE 2 --Continued

| Growth for Earning Potential | Liberal Arts and Arts | Business | Education and Psychology | Science and Technology | Health and Human Services | Row Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Column | 49 | 72 | 63 | 38 | 33 | 255 |
| Total | 19.22 | 28.24 | 24.71 | 14.90 | 12.94 | 100.00 |

Chi-square = 21.06 · , df = 8, p <.05
*Row Percent
**Column Percent
***Overall Percent

TABLE 3

Number of Survey Respondents Earning Other Academic Degrees, Certificates or Licenses (Questionnaire Item #6)

| Degrees Certificates Licenses | Liberal Arts and Arts | Business | Education and Psychology | Science and Technology | Health and Human Services | Row Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | 22 | 7 | 21 | 5 | 13 | 68 |
| | 32.35* | 10.29 | 30.88 | 7.35 | 19.12 | 26.67 |
| | 44.90** | 9.86 | 32.81 | 13.51 | 38.24 | |
| | 8.63*** | 2.74 | 8.24 | 1.96 | 5.10 | |
| No | 27 | 64 | 43 | 32 | 21 | 187 |
| | 14.44 | 34.22 | 22.99 | 17.11 | 11.23 | 73.33 |
| | 55.10 | 90.14 | 67.19 | 86.49 | 61.76 | |
| | 10.59 | 25.10 | 16.86 | 12.55 | 8.23 | |
| Column Total | 49 | 71 | 64 | 37 | 34 | 255 |
| | 19.22 | 27.84 | 25.10 | 14.51 | 13.33 | 100.00 |

Chi-square = 25.4 , $df = 4$, $p < .05$

*Row Percent

**Column Percent

***Overall Percent

TABLE 4

Crosstabulation of Subjects' Degrees
Completion Time by College

| YEARS | Count / ROW PCT / COL PCT / TOT PCT | LIB ARTS 1.00 | BUSINESS 2.00 | ED PSY 3.00 | ARTS 4.00 | SCI TECH 5.00 | HEALTH/HUMAN 6.00 | ROW TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| .00 | | 95 | 42 | 108 | 10 | 52 | 33 | 340 |
| | | 27.9* | 12.4 | 31.8 | 2.9 | 15.3 | 9.7 | 14.1 |
| | | 21.2** | 6.7 | 25.8 | 17.2 | 12.0 | 7.8 | |
| | | 4.0*** | 1.7 | 4.5 | .4 | 2.2 | 1.4 | |
| 1.00 | | 79 | 148 | 98 | 1 | 54 | 47 | 427 |
| | | 18.5 | 34.7 | 23.0 | .2 | 12.6 | 11.0 | 17.8 |
| | | 17.6 | 23.6 | 23.4 | 1.7 | 12.5 | 11.2 | |
| | | 3.3 | 6.2 | 4.1 | .0 | 2.2 | 2.0 | |
| 2.00 | | 142 | 253 | 122 | 20 | 171 | 183 | 891 |
| | | 15.9 | 28.4 | 13.7 | 2.2 | 19.2 | 20.5 | 37.1 |
| | | 31.7 | 40.4 | 29.2 | 34.5 | 39.6 | 43.5 | |
| | | 5.9 | 10.5 | 5.1 | .8 | 7.1 | 7.6 | |
| 3.00 | | 77 | 99 | 58 | 17 | 99 | 105 | 455 |
| | | 16.9 | 21.8 | 12.7 | 3.7 | 21.8 | 23.1 | 18.9 |
| | | 17.2 | 15.8 | 13.9 | 29.3 | 22.9 | 24.9 | |
| | | 3.2 | 4.1 | 2.4 | .7 | 4.1 | 4.4 | |

Continued

TABLE 4 -- Continued

| YEARS | Count / ROW PCT / COL PCT / TOT PCT | LIB ARTS 1.00 | BUSINESS ED 2.00 | ED PSY 3.00 | ARTS 4.00 | SCI TECH 5.00 | HEALTH/HUMAN 6.00 | ROW TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 4.00 | 33 | 45 | 19 | 8 | 34 | 32 | 171 |
| | | 19.3 | 26.3 | 11.1 | 4.7 | 19.9 | 18.7 | 7.1 |
| | | 7.4 | 7.2 | 4.5 | 13.8 | 7.9 | 7.6 | |
| | | 1.4 | 1.9 | .8 | .3 | 1.4 | 1.3 | |
| | 5.00 | 22 | 40 | 13 | 2 | 22 | 21 | 120 |
| | | 18.3 | 33.3 | 10.8 | 1.7 | 18.3 | 17.5 | 5.0 |
| | | 4.9 | 6.4 | 3.1 | 3.4 | 5.1 | 5.0 | |
| | | .9 | 1.7 | .5 | .1 | .9 | .9 | |
| | COLUMN TOTAL | 448 | 627 | 418 | 58 | 432 | 421 | 2404 |
| | | 18.6 | 26.1 | 17.4 | 2.4 | 18.0 | 17.5 | 100.0 |

Chi-Square = 195.5 , df = 25, $p < .05$

*Row Percent
**Column Percent
***Overall Percent

TABLE 5

Crosstabulation of Subjects Total
Credit Hours Earned by College

| TOT HRS | Count / ROW PCT / COL PCT / TOT PCT | LIB ARTS 2 | BUSINESS 3 | ED PSY 4 | ARTS 5 | SCI TECH 8 | HEALTH/HUMAN 13 | ROW TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.00 | | 26 | 12 | 40 | 5 | 8 | 15 | 106 |
| (0-50) | | 24.5* | 11.3 | 37.7 | 4.7 | 7.5 | 14.2 | 4.2 |
| | | 5.6** | 1.9 | 8.5 | 8.2 | 1.8 | 3.4 | |
| | | 1.0*** | .5 | 1.6 | .2 | .3 | .6 | |
| 2.00 | | 22 | 24 | 21 | 1 | 11 | 6 | 85 |
| (51-100) | | 25.9 | 28.2 | 24.7 | 1.2 | 12.9 | 7.1 | 3.3 |
| | | 4.7 | 3.7 | 4.4 | 1.6 | 2.4 | 1.3 | |
| | | .9 | .9 | .8 | .0 | .4 | .2 | |
| 3.00 | | 346 | 523 | 304 | 21 | 283 | 228 | 1705 |
| (101-150) | | 20.3 | 30.7 | 17.8 | 1.2 | 16.6 | 13.4 | 66.9 |
| | | 73.8 | 81.0 | 64.3 | 34.4 | 62.3 | 51.2 | |
| | | 13.6 | 20.5 | 11.9 | .8 | 11.1 | 9.0 | |
| 4.00 | | 73 | 85 | 100 | 32 | 140 | 184 | 614 |
| (151-200) | | 11.9 | 13.8 | 16.3 | 5.2 | 22.8 | 30.0 | 24.1 |
| | | 15.6 | 13.2 | 21.1 | 52.5 | 30.8 | 41.3 | |
| | | 2.9 | 3.3 | 3.9 | 1.3 | 5.5 | 7.2 | |

Continued

TABLE 5 -- Continued

| TOT HRS | Count / ROW PCT / COL PCT / TOT PCT | LIB ARTS 1.00 | BUSINESS 2.00 | ED PSY 3.00 | ARTS 4.00 | SCI TECH 5.00 | HEALTH/HUMAN 6.00 | ROW TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5.00 | 1 | 2 | 8 | 2 | 12 | 12 | 37 |
| (201*) | 2.7 | 5.4 | 21.6 | 5.4 | 32.4 | 32.4 | 1.5 |
| | .2 | .3 | 1.7 | 3.3 | 2.6 | 2.7 | |
| | .0 | .1 | .3 | .1 | .5 | .5 | |
| COLUMN TOTAL | 468 | 646 | 473 | 61 | 454 | 445 | 2547 |
| | 18.4 | 25.4 | 18.6 | 2.4 | 17.8 | 17.5 | 100.0 |

Chi-Square = 255.7 , df = 20, p <.05

*Row Percent

**Column Percent

***Overall Percent